

# Introduction to the Study of Philosophy

## SYLLABUS

OF A COURSE OF LECTURES DELIVERED IN

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BY

J. ELLIS M<sup>c</sup>TAGGART, LITT.D.

FELLOW AND LECTURER OF THE COLLEGE.

### NOTE.

These Lectures are chiefly intended for those students who, though not engaged in the systematic study of Philosophy, may desire to learn something of the objects, methods, and present problems of Metaphysic. No previous knowledge of the subject will be assumed, nor will any course of reading be required in connexion with the lectures. The treatment adopted will not be historical, but will deal mainly with the present position of metaphysical enquiries.

No fee will be charged for the lectures, which will be open to all members of the University, and of Girton and Newnham. One lecture will be given each week. Sections I—IV will be treated in the Michaelmas term, Sections V—VIII in the Lent term, and Section IX in the Easter term.

## I. INTRODUCTION.

1. Metaphysic is not a subject which can be made easy for everyone. But for those who have some power of thought, and training in thought, it is possible to give a comparatively brief account of its nature, methods, problems, and utility: not of its results, for none are universally accepted.

2. Its definition may be—provisionally—taken to be, The systematic study of the ultimate nature of Reality. Philosophy is a rather wider term, for it includes Ethics—the systematic study of the ultimate nature of the Good. Its systematic nature separates it from such study of reality as is found in poetry. Theology deals with metaphysical problems, but not always in a metaphysical way.

3. Science also consists in the systematic study of Reality. Now Metaphysic is not the aggregate of the sciences, nor merely their common principles. In the first place, Metaphysic considers certain subjects not dealt with at all by science—as God, immortality, the highest good, etc.

4. And then Science is not interested in the ultimate nature of reality in the subjects it deals with, but only in what is—comparatively—on the surface. Thus Science assumes as ultimate, without enquiry, certain premises.

5. Metaphysic has also to start with certain assumptions—for all reasoning requires premises. But it does not make them uncritically, as Science does.

6. And—at any rate according to some systems—Metaphysic criticises the validity of the conceptions of Science, and with respect to some of them, while admitting that they have their uses for practical purposes, denies that they are exactly true, or that they would be adequate for the study of the ultimate nature of Reality.

7. What is the practical utility of Metaphysic? Does it give us guidance? I do not think that a man's views on questions of practice are much affected by his views on metaphysical problems. This is fortunate, for there is so little agreement about Metaphysic that, if it were otherwise, our moral life would become chaotic.

8. The utility of Metaphysic is to be found rather in the comfort it can give us—which is still more directly practical. When we look round the world we find much misery due partly to the action of matter on spirit, partly to the actions of one spirit on another, and partly to the internal defects of spirits.

9. Some people are not troubled by the general question of how much evil there may be in the universe, but are only interested in the amount which they can directly observe, or anticipate in the immediate future. For such persons there is no practical utility in Metaphysic.

10. But people who have no interest in the more general question are rare, since, for example, all theological interest is incompatible with such a position. And interest of this sort is likely to increase as the immediate evils of our present life are mitigated by the advance of society.

11. Now the most natural attitude, as we shall see, upon these questions is Dualism, i.e. that Mind and Matter are equally real, and each exists in its own right. And Dualism would tend to confirm those fears as to the general state of the universe which had been excited by ordinary observation.

12. And if we think rather more deeply, the most natural tendency is towards Materialism, which is still more depressing.

13. But if we go further we may succeed in arriving at a belief in Idealism, and that gives us a much more cheerful view of the universe.

14. Some people, of course, succeed in arriving at Idealist views, without the aid of Metaphysic, by the help of some form of religion claiming to be revealed. But the number of those who are unable to do this is increasing.

15. The practical need for Metaphysic is thus growing. Of course we have no right to believe a particular metaphysical theory because we could not be happy unless it is true. But if



our only chance of believing it to be true is to study Metaphysic, then its connexion with our happiness gives us ample practical justification for the study.

16. Metaphysic and Science advance in quite different ways. Science, by small and frequent additions to a body of generally admitted truths. Metaphysic, by the substitution of one complete system for another. And in Metaphysic there is no decisive consensus of opinion on any point of importance.

17. The reason of this difference is to be found partly in the greater difficulty of the subject, and partly in its closer connexion with our practical interests. But it is chiefly due to the fact that metaphysical problems are much more closely connected with one another than scientific problems.

18. The continual succession of opposed systems in philosophy may be regarded dogmatically—from the point of view of one of the systems, or sceptically—as a ground for distrusting all of them.

19. Or we may consider that each of them has some truth in it, though not the whole truth. In this case we shall be able to view the multiplicity of systems not merely as so many errors (with the possible exception of one) but as approximations towards the truth, which we may find reason to believe are becoming gradually closer.

20. We shall classify the views we shall consider according to their attitude to the relation of Matter and Mind. This will give us three forms, Dualism, Materialism, and Idealism. But before discussing these, we must enquire whether we can know anything at all, and so consider Scepticism.

## II. SCEPTICISM AND AGNOSTICISM.

1. Scepticism—other than mere general caution—is either absolute, which denies the possibility of all knowledge about philosophy or anything else, or else Agnosticism, which, broadly speaking, admits the knowledge of science and every-day life, but denies the possibility of philosophical knowledge.

2. Causes which tend to make us generally cautious about all our knowledge, and which especially tend to prevent us from being too dogmatic in philosophy.

3. There is far less dogmatic certainty about philosophy at present than in earlier times. This is largely due to the greater attention paid to the history of philosophy. But caution and reserve as to the results we have reached do not paralyse enquiry. Absolute Scepticism—which tells us that we never *can* know anything—would, of course, paralyse all enquiry.

4. How are we to find any ground from which to attack Scepticism? For as the Sceptic denies everything, it would seem that we could have no common ground with him. But the Sceptic does not deny the truth of his own position.

5. Thus we may say to him—"Either you are certain that nothing can be known—and then this is a proposition which you think can be known—or you are not certain that nothing can be known—and then you have given up Absolute Scepticism."

6. Nor can he escape by saying only, "Perhaps nothing can be known." For if he does assert this, then he asserts that this possibility can be known, and if he does not assert it, it cannot help him.

7. If the Sceptic will not admit these arguments, then, indeed, we cannot argue with him. But these arguments would be denied by so few people—if by any—that we have strengthened our position by resting it on them, till it is practically impregnable.

8. It does not follow from what has been said that we should be entitled to dispose of Scepticism by saying that we had an immediate certainty of its falsehood. There are ultimate propositions which neither require nor admit of proof, but the falsity of Scepticism can not be one of them.

9. Nor are we justified in disposing of Scepticism by asserting that its defenders cannot believe what they say. For there is no reason to suppose they do not, nor would the fact, if true, be relevant. Nor would it be relevant to say—what, no doubt, is to a certain degree true—that they do not act as if they did believe it.

10. We now proceed to Agnosticism—which admits that we know what is presented to our senses, and can reason on it to a

certain extent, but denies that we can know the reality behind the presentations. These presentations are called Phenomena. The reality behind is called Noumena, or Things-in-themselves.

11. The name is sometimes, but incorrectly, applied to an absence of certainty on metaphysical subjects, or to an assertion that nothing *has been* discovered about them, without raising the question whether such discoveries are impossible.

12. Agnosticism, in the strict sense, generally rests itself on the subjective element in all knowledge, which is asserted to render that knowledge untrustworthy so far as the representation of Absolute Reality goes, though it may have some practical value.

13. But the supposition that there is an irremovable subjective element of such a nature as to vitiate our knowledge of Absolute Reality is not justifiable.

14. And, again, if the Agnostic says there is nothing behind the Phenomena, his Agnosticism vanishes. For then there is nothing beside the Phenomena, and, in knowing them, we know all the Reality that there is.

15. And if he says there is something behind the Phenomena, then he knows something about it—namely its existence—which is inconsistent with Agnosticism. And, again, his theory will require that he knows some relation which exists between the Phenomena and the Noumena. Also he must know that its nature is such that it never can be known to us.

16. All this is a good deal of knowledge about that which cannot be known to us. And not only is this inconsistent with Agnosticism, but no reason could be given why we could never know any more of that of which we admittedly know so much.

17. The Agnostic is quite right when he says that we can only start with what is given us in experience. His error lies in supposing that we cannot go beyond it.

18. On the general question of how far we are entitled to trust the power of the mind to find out truth, it leads equally to contradictions to distrust it altogether, or to trust it completely. All we can say is, that the mind is capable of making mistakes, and is also capable of correcting them.

### III. DUALISM, ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE.

1. The view of Dualism—the independence of Mind and Matter—is practically the same as that taken by Common Sense before beginning metaphysical thought. In Absolute Dualism, they are taken as neither dependent on one another, nor on anything else. In Relative Dualism, Matter and Finite Spirit are taken as independent of one another, but dependent on a third reality, usually conceived as a creative Infinite Spirit.

2. *Absolute* Dualism, however, is scarcely a position natural to Common Sense. The tendency of the latter is to regard Mind and Matter as externally connected—as in Relative Dualism.

3. The strength of Absolute Dualism lies in the fact that the world we see so strongly suggests that something analogous to our reason has considerable, but not complete, power in it. This does not go well with Materialism or Idealism, but would be quite compatible with Absolute Dualism.

4. But we cannot deny (except by passing into Scepticism or Materialism) that Mind and Matter act causally on one another. And this makes some kind of unity between them. Now it may well be doubted if such a unity could exist, unless Mind and Matter had to some degree a common nature. And if they had, Absolute Dualism would be false.

5. Again, have we any conception of what Matter would be, independently of its observation by Mind? Our idea of Matter has certain components received by means of our five senses. It also contains other elements, such as Substance, Causality, and the like, which are not given by the senses, but added by the work of the Mind.

6. The Secondary Qualities are admitted not to exist in Matter taken by itself. But then that Matter has a nature which we have never experienced, and cannot even imagine—one which consists of Primary Qualities without Secondary Qualities.

7. Again, take Extension, the most fundamental of the Primary Qualities. Can we form any idea of it apart from an observing Mind? It cannot be Extension as seen, nor yet as touched, for these differ from each other with the same object,

and each of them also varies according to the circumstances under which we see or touch.

8. Nor can it be any common quality of visual and tactual Extension, for no such quality can be observed.

9. All we are entitled to infer from the facts is that there is some reality outside us which is a part-cause of our sensations. But we have no right to suppose that it in any way resembles them. Therefore the Primary Qualities can no more be ascribed to Matter in itself than the Secondary could be.

10. As for such Categories as Substance and Causality, we do not get them through sensations, and they can therefore only be the work of the mind.

11. But what reason have we to accept them as valid? None, except that, without them, we could not make a coherent theory of things. But, if Matter in itself exists quite independently of our minds, what right have we to say that its nature must be such as would admit a theory of it which would be coherent to our minds? If we keep Absolute Dualism, we have no right to predicate of Matter categories due to the working of our minds.

12. Thus, if we separate Matter from an observing mind, no part of the conception is left, and the assertion of its existence is meaningless. Now Mind is not in the same position. For, even if it could only exist *in company with* Matter, it certainly exists for itself, and not merely *for* Matter. Whereas the whole nature of Matter has been resolved into its relation to Mind.

13. We now pass on to Relative Dualism. This is very close to the position of the natural man before he studies Metaphysic. But it loses the advantage that Absolute Dualism had of being specially able to explain such an apparently heterogeneous universe as this. For it refers all things to a single mind, and so the *primâ facie* partial irrationality of the universe is as much a difficulty for it as for Idealism.

14. With Relative Dualism the difficulty which, in the case of Absolute Dualism; arises as to interaction does not take place, since the theory admits some common nature belonging to both Mind and Matter.

15. But still, if Matter and finite Mind are to be on an equality, it will be necessary that Matter should have some

existence in itself, independent of its existence for Mind. And then the same difficulties will occur, as to Primary and Secondary Qualities, which occurred in the case of Dualism.

16. It is no doubt reasonable to hold that my sensations are not exclusively caused by myself. But this does not justify a belief in a self-existent Matter, for the cause in question might be another self, either divine or human.

17. Berkeley's explanation would account for the existence and the regularity of the sensations as well as a Dualistic theory, while avoiding the difficulties of such a theory.

18. Nor is it legitimate to appeal to our "instinctive" belief in Matter, nor to demand that people who disbelieve in it shall consent to thrust their hands into the flame of a candle.

#### IV. MATERIALISM AND PRESENTATIONISM.

1. Materialism holds that Matter is the only reality in the universe, and that all activities commonly ascribed to Mind are really activities of Matter.

2. Materialism has the recommendation of being a Monism, and therefore a more perfect explanation of the universe than a Dualism can be.

3. And, starting from the natural position of Dualism, it seems more natural to reduce the universe to Matter than to Mind. In the first place the number of laws relating to Matter which we know is much greater than the number of laws relating to Mind.

4. And Matter forms one great whole, persisting through many ages. Mind appears in the form of separate individuals, isolated from each other by Matter, and each ceasing, so far as our observation goes, after a very few years.

5. Also the changes which we can observe Mind to make in Matter are comparatively insignificant, while a very slight change in Matter will either destroy Mind, or, at least, remove it from the only circumstances in which we can observe its existence. All these characteristics make Matter appear much more powerful and important than Mind.

6. Also Idealism was weakened by being supposed to be bound up with certain theological doctrines which became discredited. All these things account for the great strength of Materialism some years ago.

7. There has been a reaction against this, but the extent of the reaction has been exaggerated. It still remains the belief to which most people tend on first leaving an unreflecting position. And many remain there. Science is a large element in our lives now, and if we try to make Science serve as Metaphysic, we get Materialism.

8. Nor is it to be wished—even by Idealists—that Materialism should become too weak. For Idealism is seldom really vigorous except in those who have had a serious struggle with Materialism.

9. Materialism cannot be disproved by the *primâ facie* difference between thought and motion. For there is a great *primâ facie* difference, e.g., between heat and motion. Nor can such imperfect order and symmetry as we are able to observe in the universe be said to be incompatible with Materialism.

10. It would be very difficult to disprove Materialism, if we once accepted the reality of Matter, as a Thing in Itself. But, as we saw when considering Dualism, such a reality of Matter is untenable (II. 5-12). And this conclusion is even more obviously fatal to Materialism than it was to Dualism.

11. And, again, if Materialism is true, all our thoughts are produced by purely material antecedents. These are quite blind, and are just as likely to produce falsehood as truth. We have thus no reason for believing any of our conclusions—including the truth of Materialism, which is therefore a self-contradictory hypothesis.

12. We now come to Presentationism, which rejects the existence alike of Matter and of Selves, and which makes the ultimate reality to be units of mental occurrences, combined either by pure chance, or by laws analogous to those of mechanics.

13. It may seem curious to rank a theory which denies Matter with Materialism. But what is important is not the name which is given to Reality, but the sort of action which is held to express its real nature.

14. Now Presentationism denies that the ultimate nature of Reality is adequately expressed by any of the characteristics which *primâ facie* appear in Mind. And it asserts that the ultimate nature of Reality causes it to act in ways which are adequately expressed by the laws *primâ facie* evident in Matter. It thus makes the nature of Reality resemble Matter more closely than Mind, and so is properly ranked by the side of Materialism.

15. It is generally approached through Materialism, and is more difficult to reach than Materialism, though not so difficult as Idealism. It escapes, of course, the objection to Materialism which rests on the impossibility of conceiving Matter as a Thing-in-Itself.

16. But the other argument against Materialism (cp. 11, above) applies equally to Presentationism. As this is the only argument against Presentationism it should be carefully considered.

17. Presentationism is incompatible with the truth of general propositions—and therefore with itself, since it can only be expressed by a general proposition.

18. And closer analysis shows that it is incompatible even with particular propositions, since these (*a*) involve the union of two terms, (*b*) involve the use of general ideas.

19. Thus the theory breaks down because it leads to complete scepticism, invalidating both general and particular propositions. And complete scepticism is, as we have seen before, self-contradictory.

20. The theory is more often called Sensationalism or Phenomenalism. But neither of these names is completely satisfactory.

## V. DOGMATIC IDEALISM.

1. This may be defined as an attempt to prove the truth of Idealism otherwise than by a direct enquiry into the nature of Reality. The two most usual forms are (*a*) it is true, because it is believed, (*b*) it is true, because such disastrous consequences would follow if it were not true.



2. And the first of these falls into three subdivisions. ( $\alpha$ ) It is true, because I cannot help believing it to be true. ( $\beta$ ) It is true, because everyone does believe it to be true. ( $\gamma$ ) It is true, because most people believe it to be true.

3. It is generally of some particular doctrine, rather than of a whole system of Idealism, that such assertions are made.

4. ( $\alpha$ ) If anyone has a belief in the truth of a doctrine for which he cannot give any reasons, and which cannot be shaken, it is no doubt useless to argue with him. But he, again, has no right to argue with anyone else. This however is often ignored.

5. That X should have an inevitable belief in a proposition involves that he must believe it. But that X must believe it, is no reason why Z should believe it, and, by the hypothesis, X has no other reason for his belief to give to Z. The fact of X's irresistible conviction is only interesting to other people if they are interested in his biography, or in psychological statistics.

6. Again, many opinions which appear to be immediate, are really based on arguments. And some opinions which are not based on arguments can yet be refuted by them—as in certain cases of prejudice.

7. Nor can positions of this sort derive strength from the undoubted fact that every argument must begin with some premises which must be assumed as true.

8. ( $\beta$ ) This argument, in its strict sense, is either false or useless. For if everyone does believe a certain conclusion what is the good of proving what no one doubts?

9. If we say that the belief is one which all people believe unless they have become sophisticated, the word sophistication begs the question. And why should we believe that our original convictions are more likely to be true than later ones? Especially as many of our original convictions are admitted by every one to be erroneous.

10. ( $\gamma$ ) The argument from the opinion of the majority is of but little value, when it is considered how many people are affected by irrelevant considerations. And if experts are to be distrusted in philosophy, on account of their want of unanimity, it scarcely warrants a trust in those who are not experts.

11. We now come to the second variety of Dogmatic Idealism, that which concludes the truth of a proposition from the unsatisfactory results which would follow from its falsity. Here again there are two subdivisions, according as the unsatisfactory results would affect, ( $\alpha$ ) happiness, or ( $\beta$ ) virtue.

12. ( $\alpha$ ) The first asserts that the world would be an intolerable place unless some form of Idealism or Relative Dualism were true. The assertion must be admitted to have considerable weight. The world as we see it has much that is unsatisfactory.

13. Materialism would give us no reason to suppose that the universe as a whole was better than what we see. And, in particular, it can give us no hope that either we ourselves or the human race will escape annihilation.

14. Absolute Dualism would give us no more cheerful prospect. It leaves, indeed, a chance of Immortality, but of an Immortality exposed to so many evils that most people would think it worse than none.

15. But then what ground have we to assert that the universe is not intolerable? Perhaps it *is* intolerable. If we were already Idealists, we might possibly be sure it was not so, but it would beg the question to use a belief obtained in this way to prove Idealism.

16. ( $\beta$ ) It is argued, to begin with, that no theory but Idealism would be compatible with the existence of virtue, while the existence of virtue cannot be denied. This is not strictly an argument from consequences. It is invalid, for there is no reason why virtue should not arise in a universe whose fundamental nature was indifferent to virtue.

17. Then it is argued that no theory but Idealism would ensure the eventual triumph of virtue, and then it would be absurd to be virtuous. But, if this were so, how can we be certain that it is not absurd to be virtuous? And why should it be absurd to be virtuous because virtue cannot be completely triumphant?

18. It is argued also, that, if virtue were not assured of complete success, people would not, in point of fact, be virtuous. This could only prove, at the most, the necessity of people believing in the success of virtue. It could not prove the reality of the success.

19. But there is not the least reason to suppose that people would be less virtuous because they did not believe in a complete triumph of virtue hereafter.

20. To argue that a thing cannot be real because it is very bad is to subvert the foundations of morality. For it follows that, if it were real, it could not be very bad. And then moral judgments have ceased to be supreme in their own sphere.

## VI. THE CRITICAL POSITION.

1. What method is adequate to the direct proof of Idealism? The deductive methods recognized by Formal Logic are insufficient, for they cannot give us new knowledge, but only make explicit what is already known.

2. Nor would Induction be adequate, for all Induction rests on the law of the Uniformity of Nature. It is one of the most important tasks of philosophy to consider if this law is true, and it would not be justified, therefore, in starting by assuming its truth.

3. Moreover, almost every proposition which we wish to examine in Metaphysic is of such enormous extent as compared with the range of our direct experience, that any induction about it, having only that direct experience as its basis, will be quite worthless.

4. Let us try enquiring what conditions are necessary in order that we may have experience at all. Such a method does not involve, as Induction does, the assumption of the Uniformity of Nature.

5. And we can legitimately make our conclusions universal. For they will apply to all experience. Now, in the first place, anything outside actual or possible experience is at any rate of no practical interest to us.

6. And, more than this, something outside the range of possible experience has no meaning for us, even as a possibility. For we can form no idea of it, and it would have no common basis with anything we know.

7. Possibilities with nothing positive about them are valueless. If we say that something of which we know nothing may

be possible, because we do not know anything which makes it impossible, this is an empty and idle "possibility."

8. And, again, this method would not be sterile like pure deduction. For it is based on observation, though on the observation of *à priori* element only in experience.

9. This method was first explicitly developed by Kant. But he did not realise its full force. And many philosophers before Kant used arguments which were essentially critical.

10. We may illustrate the position by the metaphor of a man looking through a window of red glass, who knows that everything he sees will be seen by him as red, and so is able to make a universal judgment on the matter without waiting for the actual experience.

11. But the metaphor is deceptive. For the things have a real colour of their own, which the glass does not permit us to see. And we should know them more truly if the glass were broken.

12. There is a tendency to interpret the critical theory this way, but it is quite erroneous. The conditions which it discovers are essential to any experience, not to a particular kind of experience. And if they were removed, instead of knowing more truly, we should know nothing at all.

13. This enquiry into the conditions of reality is *not* a psychological enquiry, though it is sometimes supposed to be one. Psychology deals with the *fact* of knowledge, which is *part* of Reality. Our present enquiry deals with the *contents* of knowledge, which is the *whole* of Reality.

14. And Psychology is on the same comparatively uncritical level as the other sciences, while our present enquiry is on the level of philosophy.

15. It is to be noted that when this method tells us that the principle A is involved in the truth of B, it does not mean that everyone who believes B must be aware of A, but there is a contradiction in affirming B to be true and at the same time denying the truth of A.

16. A critical argument is always *ad hominem*. For it starts from the validity of some experience, and would be of no value against a sceptic who denied that validity. Hence critical arguments are of very different degrees of value.

17. We cannot say in a general way what can be proved by this method. But, merely as an example, I will sketch a proof of causality, substantially identical with Kant's proof of it, which was directed especially against Hume.

18. Hume denied the validity of the idea of Causation. But he did not deny the validity of the idea of Objective Succession, i.e. that ideas may be known by our thoughts to have occurred in an order different from the order of our thoughts about them. And he could not have denied this, consistently with the rest of his system.

19. Kant's argument is that there is nothing in our experience which can suggest an Objective Succession of events which is distinct from, and may be contrary to, the Subjective Succession of apprehension.

20. Unless therefore we are certain *à priori* that the events have a fixed and definite order among themselves, we could have no reason to believe in such an order. And such an order could only be determined by Causation. Either then we must reject Objective Succession, or we must admit Causation to be valid *à priori*.

## VII. THE DIALECTIC POSITION.

1. The Critical position was, as we have seen, *ad hominem*. It does not possess any special starting point, and the arguments which form a Critical system do not form a single train of reasoning.

2. The Dialectic position, on the other hand, which is a modification of the Critical, is one according to which the entire system forms a single chain of argument proceeding from one definite starting point.

3. This position is very closely associated with Hegel. Indeed, we may say that there has as yet been no dialectic system which has not been very distinctly Hegelian.

4. Hegel has been dead more than 70 years, and his philosophy is not so much accepted as formerly. But this is partly due to the general diminution of interest in philosophy—at any

rate in some countries. The philosophy of the present day is very largely Hegelian.

5. The dialectic begins by determining a starting point which must be accepted as valid by everybody, and not merely by a particular opponent. It finds this in the assertion Something Is, or in other words, in the validity of the Category of Being. We may define a category as a general idea which is of an *à priori* nature, and which is accepted as having fundamental importance in the structure of the universe.

6. The system forms, as has been said, a single chain of argument from this beginning. The method of the advance may be provisionally described as the alternate production and removal of contradictions.

7. Taking the first step in Hegel's dialectic as an example, we find that the idea of Pure Being, with which we start, turns out to be identical with the idea of Nothing. It must be remembered that it is only the idea of *Pure* Being, not of *Determinate* Being, of which this is said.

8. But the ideas of Pure Being and Nothing are incompatible with one another. And thus we have a contradiction. Hegel removes this by asserting (after an intermediate stage) that the truth lies in the validity of the category of *Determinate* Being, in which Pure Being and Nothing are reconciled.

9. The new term thus reached develops a fresh contradiction, and a similar process occurs, and is repeated till we reach a final category which develops no contradiction, and is called the Absolute Idea.

10. The movement in each case is from a Thesis to an Antithesis, which is the contrary (and not the contradictory) of the Thesis. From the Thesis and Antithesis the movement proceeds to the Synthesis which reconciles them.

11. A marked peculiarity of the dialectic process is that as it advances it demonstrates the premises from which it started to be only partially true, and to be partly false. It follows from this that the Absolute Idea is the only category in the dialectic which is absolutely valid, though the other categories have all a certain degree of validity.

12. The main object of the dialectic is to arrive at the complete truth of the Absolute Idea, but it also gives us infor-

mation about the comparative truth of the lower categories, for the later they come in the process, the greater will be their relative truth.

13. The dialectic process has been often said to violate the law of contradiction. But it is very far from doing this. On the contrary, its advance depends entirely on the certainty that a contradiction is a mark of error. Otherwise there would be no reason for going on to the Synthesis.

14. The process is one of negation and complement. The Antithesis is not merely contrary to the Thesis, but it is the element which, with the Thesis, is found in the Synthesis.

15. Now of these two factors it is that of completion which is essential. In the process of development the idea negates itself, but it only does so because it is driven to complete itself, and the only road to completion is through negation.

16. The idea of the Synthesis is difficult to grasp. It is best done by seeing what ideas Hegel does treat as synthesising certain contradictions. We do not synthesise two ideas by applying them to different fields, nor by splitting the difference between them.

17. As an example of this let us take the possible ways in which two such ideas as Liberty and Order can be treated.

18. The evidence for the validity of a Synthesis is always in some degree negative, as depending on the impossibility of any other category being discovered which would equally remove the contradiction.

19. Let us now consider what are the most general results that Hegel gets out of his dialectic. We may say that they are two—the balance of Unity and Differentiation, and Freedom.

20. The universe is clearly a differentiated unity. What Hegel does is to prove that unity and differentiation are so intimately connected that anything can only be a close unity in proportion as its parts are clearly differentiated, and *vice versa*.

21. And he also proves that the nature of the whole must be in each part in such a way as to render each part self-determined, and therefore free.

## VIII. THE RESULTS OF IDEALISM.

1. It does not follow, from the validity of the Critical or the Dialectic methods, that we could prove Idealism by their means. The result might be of a different nature. We have not time to examine in detail in this course what could be proved by either method; but shall here consider what varieties of Idealism are possible.

2. Idealism holds that Spirit is the sole absolute Reality. But with reference to Personality, Spirit may be regarded as being essentially personal, or as not being so. The latter view can be subdivided, according as it is held ( $\alpha$ ) that Spirit is adequately expressed in a personal form, but can also be adequately expressed otherwise, ( $\beta$ ) that personality is not an adequate expression for Spirit.

3. Of these ( $\alpha$ ) rests mainly on the large amount of the universe which is, *primâ facie*, not personal, and would be refuted, if at all, by some theory which would explain this fact in a way compatible with all Spirit being personal.

4. ( $\beta$ ) is mainly supported by an attempted demonstration that the finite is, as such, contradictory, and that therefore the finite self is not an adequate expression of Spirit. This view may be doubted.

5. The difficulty about both these views is to understand what the nature of Spirit could be, if it was not personal, since all the Spirit which we know directly, or which we empirically infer, is personal.

6. Should all Spirit be personal, it would not follow that it must all be one person or else not all be one unity. It might quite well be a perfect unity, which was not itself a person, but of which all the parts were persons.

7. On the theory that all Reality consists of persons, how can we account for the part of our experience which is *primâ facie* not personal? There are two methods. ( $\alpha$ ) Berkeley's solution, which we may call the Consistent Dream theory, by which all Matter is resolved into sensations in the mind of some person—sensations without any outside reference at all.



8. This does not destroy the reality of knowledge. For by this theory our waking experience still differs from dreams in just those characteristics that determine real knowledge—coherency, continuity, and community.

9. The other explanation ( $\beta$ ) is to ascribe the appearance of impersonal reality, which I experience, to some reality, not myself, which is personal. The appearance of impersonality is referred either to a defect in my observation, or to an imperfection in the selves observed, or to both.

10. The mechanical nature of the actions of this reality might be accounted for either by the imperfect development of the selves, or by the supposition that we only see the resultant of the actions of a great number of selves.

11. Each theory has its weaknesses. The second theory ( $\beta$ ) has the advantage of accounting more simply for the sub-human life which we perceive round us.

12. We pass to the relation of Idealism to our desires and aspirations. These are so closely bound up with our personality, that those forms of Idealism which admit of impersonal Spirit are almost—though not quite—as unfavourable to them as Materialism or Absolute Dualism would be.

13. With those forms of Idealism which make Spirit essentially personal, there is no longer a presumption against the harmony of the universe with our desires. But that harmony is by no means proved.

14. It would be impossible to prove it in this course. I can only indicate a way in which it might be possible, by means of the ideas of unity and differentiation.

15. The question of the satisfaction of our natures depends partly on the relation of the self to the environment, and partly on whether the nature of the self is such that any environment could satisfy it.

16. A mere causal unity between the self and its environment would not help us to a harmony between the self and its environment. But it would be different if we found reason to believe that they were included in a unity whose nature was just to be manifested in each of its differentiations, while the nature of each of the differentiations was just to manifest the whole nature of the unity.

17. Such a unity as this is sometimes called an organic unity. But such a name is misleading, for an organism has more in its nature than its manifestation in its parts, and the parts have a nature besides their connection in the organism.

18. The unity of which we speak might be called a Community of Selves if we guarded against atomistic implications. For the importance of the unity and of the differentiations would have to be exactly balanced, if the unity is to be such as can help us.

19. And such a unity as this might also remove the doubt whether the nature of the self is such as could be satisfied by any possible environment. But at this point the subject must be left for treatment elsewhere than in this course.

20. But if such results as I have sketched here could be proved, should we not have proved too much by proving that we could experience no disharmony, while we notoriously do experience some disharmony? This leads us on to the final division of these lectures—the problem of good and evil.

## IX. THE PROBLEM OF GOOD AND EVIL.

1. We have now to consider whether any *a priori* conclusion can be arrived at as to the relative importance of Good and Evil, and whether in the long run, or over the whole universe, one is completely or very greatly preponderant.

2. The universe could *result* in producing only, or mostly, good, without having a *purpose* to do so. But, if it had the purpose, it must have the result, for nothing could thwart the purpose of the whole universe. Let us consider the question of purpose first. This need not necessarily be a conscious purpose.

3. The view that the purpose of the universe is only to produce the good is confronted with the fact that evil does exist. This has been met, at times, by the assertion, that evil, whether sin or pain, has no reality.

4. But if this were so, everything which was not good would be sinful, and everything which was not happy would be painful. The example of a stone is sufficient to refute this. There are

senses in which evil is the negation of good, but it is impossible to take it as a bare negation.

5. Then there is the argument which says that although evil exists when we look at a part of the universe by itself, yet when we look at the whole, it is not nearly counterbalanced, but vanishes away.

6. But then evil does exist for all the finite persons we know, and it seems futile to say that it does not exist at all. If it does not exist for omniscient beings, if any exist, that does not prevent its existing for us.

7. If it be said that every finite being may become omniscient, it must be admitted that some of them are not omniscient at present. Thus the argument no longer denies the evil of the universe at the present time, and the attempt to reconcile present evil with future or eternal good is another question which we must consider later.

8. Another argument says that if we looked at the whole course of the world in time, the events, which when taken separately were evil, would be seen to be completely good. This is a stronger argument than the last because it is not so clear that each moment in a person's life has worth in itself as it is that each person has worth in himself.

9. But the world, according to this theory, is only good when we see the whole of it at once. And we do not do so now. If it is said that we shall do so in the future, this would not make the world completely good. For the past, though less important to us, is as much part of the world as the future, and the past would be admitted to be bad.

10. Or shall we say that true perfection is to be found, not in a temporal future, but in some timeless state, in which all its successive temporal states should be timelessly summed up, and which is the true reality, all the isolation of these elements into successive steps in time being unreal.

11. This is too subtle a point to discuss here. But even if substantiated, the theory would not do what was wanted. For if we are not conscious of this state, the evil remains for us.

12. And what right have we to suppose that we shall ever be conscious of this state, even if some suicide of time could be

imagined? For if the imperfect-time process is incompatible with the timeless perfection, we must be wrong in believing in the timeless perfection, since the time process certainly exists. But if the time process is compatible with the perfection now, why not always? And if always, *we* shall never get rid of evil, since the time process will be left.

13. This is the fundamental difficulty of all theories which attempt to prove Reality to be completely good. If the evil is really evil, its existence proves that Reality cannot be wholly good. If it is not really evil, the goodness of Reality affords us no ground for hoping that we shall get rid of it, while it remains just as unpleasant for us.

14. Efforts are continually made to deduce the vanishing of evil in the future from the fact that Reality is in its ultimate nature completely good, but they are all invalidated by this difficulty.

15. Can we, we must now enquire, account for evil by accepting it as real, and explaining it as an indispensable condition for the realization of some good purpose?

16. It is sometimes asserted that we can see for ourselves that good could not exist except as opposed to existent evil, and that therefore evil is an indispensable condition of good. But when we enquire into the grounds for this view it does not seem correct.

17. A more general application is to ascribe the universe to a cause—for example a personal God—which is wholly directed towards good, and then to account for the evil by asserting that the cause worked under such limitations that it could not have produced the good unless it also produced the evil.

18. The theory has this in its support—that the conception of a will which did not work under limitations would be meaningless. For the laws of logic would not apply to it. And, again, could it create something which it could not destroy?

19. (The use of means always implies that the power which uses them is limited. For means are not employed for their own sake, but because the agent cannot accomplish his end without them.)

20. The facts would be equally consistent with the theory that the cause was working for evil, and that it was the good

which resulted from the limitations of its power. And, in any case, the purpose of the whole universe could not be good. If the purpose of the cause was good, the purpose of the limitations on its power could not be.

21. And if the universe is produced by a cause directed towards good, then the whole of the universe has not a good purpose. For those evils in the universe which are due to the limitations of the power of the cause, are clearly not due to any good purpose.

22. And this theory, while it would involve that good could never be completely destroyed in the universe, would put no limit to the possible excess of evil over good. However bad the universe was, it might still be the best that the good cause could produce under the limitations to which it was subject.

23. All this is on the assumption that we are not able to know anything else about the limitations on the power of the good cause except that they do limit it, and do produce evil.

24. There have been attempts to maintain an omnipotent good cause, in spite of the existence of evil, by trusting to the feebleness of our intellects. But this is suicidal, for exactly the same argument might be used to suppose any other conclusion on the same subject.

25. And any attempt to determine empirically that good is more than evil, or is gaining on evil, is illegitimate because of the small proportion which the facts observed must bear to the conclusion.

26. Abandoning the attempt to prove that the universe has a purpose directed to good as such, can anything be made of the attempt to prove that it had some other purpose which secured a preponderance, though not an unmixed state, of good? This, at any rate, if proved, would prove neither too much nor too little.

27. Have we any reason to suppose that evil has an essentially subordinate position in Reality, i.e., on the Idealist hypotheses, in Spirit?

28. With sin this does seem to be the case. For a complete state of sin—unlike a complete state of virtue—is impossible. And again all action, good or bad, is for something conceived, rightly or wrongly, as being in some aspect good.

29. It is more difficult to prove the subordinate character of pain. But it is to be noticed that all pain comes from want of harmony, and that if the want of harmony became too great, the pain would cease. Thus pain has an intrinsic limit. This consideration, however, is perhaps hardly strong enough for our purpose.

30. Coming to a more general point—suppose that the conception of the One and the Many, which we have seen was held by Hegel, was the adequate interpretation of Reality.

31. In that case harmony would be clearly preponderant over disharmony. For the nature of each individual would just be to manifest the whole. And the nature of the whole is just that it should be manifested, not only in that individual, but in all of them. Consequently the nature of each individual requires, for its own realization of its nature, that the others should also realise their nature. For if not, then the whole cannot realise its nature, and then the part originally spoken of cannot realize its nature either.

32. But doesn't this go too far and prove that there can be *no* disharmony, and so *no* pain? For then we should be back in the same difficulties as previously. What we want is a theory which will allow disharmony, and so pain, a place in Reality, but will ensure that it shall be a subsidiary place.

33. I cannot go further into the question here, but will only say that I believe the solution might possibly be found in regarding the harmony as eternal, and the disharmony as caused by the manifestation of the eternal in time.

34. At any rate, this would be consistent with a view which has other grounds to support it—that the determination of the relation of time to eternity is at present the most pressing and important question in philosophy.

35. This theory, unlike the one which we discussed previously (cp. 10 above), does not seek to prove that there is no evil, but only that the evil is subordinate. It therefore does not involve the same difficulties.

36. It may be objected that such a theory, while giving us a hopeful view of the universe, could not enable us to regard the cause of the universe as a being deserving veneration. For the

theory involves that evil is not inconsistent with the purpose of the universe, and a being with whose purpose evil is not inconsistent is a morally evil being.

37. But this difficulty is avoided if ( $\alpha$ ) we are able to regard the universe as the work of a conscious being acting under limitations. For then *his* purpose might be completely good, although that of the whole universe (which includes his limitations) was not so.

38. Or ( $\beta$ ) the universe might be regarded as not caused by a conscious being at all, in which case the question of moral nature would not arise.

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